

Members

Rep. Gregory Porter, Chairperson  
Rep. Terry Goodin  
Rep. Paul Robertson  
Rep. Robert Behning  
Rep. Timothy Harris  
Rep. Jeffrey Thompson  
Sen. Teresa Lubbers, Vice-Chairperson  
Sen. Phil Boots  
Sen. James Buck  
Sen. James Arnold  
Sen. Jean Breaux  
Sen. Connie Sipes



## INTERIM STUDY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION MATTERS

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### MEETING MINUTES<sup>1</sup>

**Meeting Date:** September 10, 2008  
**Meeting Time:** 11:00 A.M.  
**Meeting Place:** State House, 200 W. Washington  
St., House Chambers  
**Meeting City:** Indianapolis, Indiana  
**Meeting Number:** 2

**Members Present:** Rep. Gregory Porter, Chairperson; Rep. Terry Goodin; Rep. Paul Robertson; Rep. Robert Behning; Rep. Timothy Harris; Sen. Teresa Lubbers, Vice-Chairperson; Sen. Phil Boots; Sen. James Buck; Sen. James Arnold; Sen. Jean Breaux; Sen. Connie Sipes; .

**Members Absent:** Rep. Jeffrey Thompson.

Representative Gregory Porter, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 11:10 a.m. Members of the Interim Study Committee for Education Matters (Committee) introduced themselves.

Terry Spradlin, Center for Evaluation & Education Policy, Indiana University, gave an overview of virtual education in the U.S. and Indiana that included virtual education polling data, promises and pitfalls of virtual education, types of programs available, goals and objectives of the programs currently available, teacher and program quality, accountability

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<sup>1</sup> Exhibits and other materials referenced in these minutes can be inspected and copied in the Legislative Information Center in Room 230 of the State House in Indianapolis, Indiana. Requests for copies may be mailed to the Legislative Information Center, Legislative Services Agency, 200 West Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2789. A fee of \$0.15 per page and mailing costs will be charged for copies. These minutes are also available on the Internet at the General Assembly homepage. The URL address of the General Assembly homepage is <http://www.in.gov/legislative/>. No fee is charged for viewing, downloading, or printing minutes from the Internet.

and oversight, and funding. (See Exhibit A)

Committee members voiced concerns over the following issues:

- (1) The availability of performance data for virtual schools currently in existence.
- (2) Which funding mechanisms work best.
- (3) Fraud.
- (4) Teacher quality.
- (5) Equity.

Representative Terri Austin discussed virtual learning programs across the nation. She stated that 42 states currently offer virtual education through either:

- (1) a supplemental program that allows for expanded course offerings, such as advanced placement (AP) courses and credit recovery, which is a possible strategy to address teacher shortages, e.g. in mathematics and science at the high school level; or
- (2) a full-time program that offers the majority or entirety of courses online, provides a full spectrum of school services, including special education services, and generally provides a computer, Internet access, and course materials free to the student.

She explained that her purpose for authoring virtual education legislation in the last General Assembly session was to encourage Indiana to proceed with offering virtual education in a responsible way.

John Watson, Evergreen Associates, discussed some facts and issues regarding K-12 virtual education programs across the nation, including the following items:

- (1) New online programs are being developed every year, and the total number of online programs is increasing quickly.
- (2) Myriad types of programs exist, mixing and matching among variables that include type of governance (state-led, charter, district, etc.), amount of instruction online (fully online, hybrid), course types, student types, geographic reach, and other variables.
- (3) Promising practices, with demonstrated success, are being developed in teacher professional development, teacher management, communication between teachers and students, data management, course development, and other areas of practice.
- (4) A small number of programs have attracted attention from policymakers due to questions about finances, quality, and ways in which the programs adhere to existing laws and regulations. There has been increased scrutiny of online programs, particularly full-time programs, in a few states, and programs that do not adhere to quality standards risk creating a backlash that could impair all online programs.
- (5) Data to evaluate online programs against face-to-face education are lacking, in part because of shortcomings of state data systems and in part because online student populations are at most only 1-2% of the total.
- (6) Data to compare online programs to one another are insufficient because of a lack of common measures in calculating and reporting student achievement.

(See Exhibit B)

Bruce Colston, Indiana Virtual Learning Consortium (IVLC), introduced members of the IVLC representing the five providers of virtual learning in Indiana. The members are the Indiana Academy of Science, Mathematics, and Humanities, the Indiana Online Academy, Indiana University Virtual High School, the Indiana Virtual Academy, and Ivy Tech Community College. He stated that the IVLC believes the following issues should be addressed to assure quality virtual education programs in Indiana:

- (1) The state of Indiana needs to have state standards for virtual education based upon recognized best practices, national standards, and Indiana state curriculum standards.
- (2) All Indiana high school students should be taught by Indiana certified teachers or otherwise highly qualified professionals who possess the appropriate academic background.
- (3) All virtual high school courses offered for credit in Indiana should follow the Indiana state curriculum standards.
- (4) All high school students in Indiana should be provided the opportunity to engage in virtual learning experiences prior to graduation.
- (5) All high school students in Indiana should be provided an opportunity to engage in challenging early college courses (AP, dual-credit) offered through a virtual format.
- (6) The IVLC should collaborate with the Indiana Department of Education and other educational institutions and agencies to develop and promote standards for high quality virtual education.
- (7) The IVLC should collaborate with school districts, schools, and individual students in order to provide high quality virtual education to the students of Indiana.
- (8) Virtual education should be affordable to all high school students in Indiana.

(See Exhibits C and D)

Lynette Quinn, Indiana Virtual Families, urged the Committee to encourage the Indiana General Assembly to lift the moratorium on full-time public virtual schools in order to give the children of Indiana more educational options. She discussed the potential cost saving benefits of virtual schools. (See Exhibit E)

Mickey Revenaugh, Connections Academy, presented information concerning the North American Council for Online Learning (NACOL). NACOL is an international K-12 non-profit organization that represents the interests of administrators, practitioners, businesses and students involved in online learning in the United States, Canada and Mexico. She stated that NACOL has endorsed the National Standards of Quality for Online Courses. The standards selected are based on the results of a research review and a survey of online course quality criteria. These standards include common benchmarks that may be used to evaluate online courses. (See Exhibits F and G)

Lisa Gillis, Insight School, presented information concerning the Insight School. She stated that the school specializes in high school students and is currently located in ten states but not Indiana. She stated that the Insight School offers a full-time, diploma-granting, tuition-free education. The school focuses on the following type of students:

- (1) Youth who must work, or who have child or family care responsibilities.
- (2) Teens who are pursuing their dreams in sports, entertainment, modeling, dancing, or other careers that may not allow them to attend traditional school regularly.
- (3) Students who do not function well in large, rigid classroom settings, or

who don't connect socially in a large school setting.

(4) Students who are challenged with health or physical issues, and who may need flexibility of location.

(5) Students who may reach their creative peak in the evening, and find it difficult to attend school in the early morning.

(6) Students who need more challenging course work and want to move at an accelerated pace, or those that need extra time to master a concept or skill.

(7) Home-schooled students who may want subject matter help from a certified teacher in advanced classes, but do not want to attend the traditional setting.

Ron Brumbargar, Hoosier Academy (Academy), introduced administrators of the Academy and presented information concerning the program structure of the school that blends classroom and online learning. (See Exhibit H) Mr. Brumbargar encouraged the Committee to consider the issues of funding, accountability, and oversight regarding virtual schools in order to make the schools viable in Indiana.

Carmen Dodd, Compass Learning (Compass), presented information concerning Odyssey®, Compass's K—12 software-based curriculum. She stated that Compass is a virtual content provider of research based instruction that meets Indiana state standards and is based on current scientific research into how students think and learn. She stated that the company works with traditional schools to offer credit recovery and acceleration.

Dan Clark, Indiana State Teachers Association, presented the following recommendations :

- (1) Indiana should support public school virtual learning, including:
  - (a) supplemental learning activities for in-person learning activities;
  - (b) virtual courses.
- (2) The Indiana Department of Education should assume oversight of the IVLC.
- (3) Students enrolled in a public school should be eligible for services from IVLC.
- (4) A student enrolled in a public school should be able to participate in virtual learning courses by agreement of the appropriate school personnel and the students' parents.
- (5) The IVLC should be subject to the same auditing requirements that apply to other public education cooperatives.
- (6) Virtual courses should be aligned to state academic standards.
- (7) Virtual course teachers should be properly licensed to teach in Indiana and evaluated in a manner similar to all other certified teachers.
- (8) Schools which participate in the IVLC courses should provide a qualified monitor who is certified in the subject matter to provide in-person instructional assistance to students.
- (9) Penalties for student cheating or plagiarism in virtual courses should be consistent with penalties for similar activities for in-person courses.
- (10) Virtual learning activities that are to be graded should be conducted at a common time and should utilize webcams.
- (11) Major exams for virtual learning courses should be taken in person at the school.
- (12) The State Board of Education should adopt rigorous academic and fiscal requirements for virtual learning providers, which must be identified and approved in order to provide virtual learning courses or activities.
- (13) The State Board of Education should adopt appropriate virtual course

class size limits.

(14) A school corporation should receive money (\$) per average daily membership (ADM) funding for students enrolled in virtual learning courses as follows:

- (a) The course must be relevant to the student's graduation plan.
- (b) Course not available at the school 100% \$/ADM
- (c) Schedule conflict prevents student from taking the course. 100% \$/ADM
- (d) Course is available but student is enrolled in the same virtual course. 30% of \$/ADM per course
- (e) Public school students should not be charged tuition or fees for virtual school courses.

(15) Instructional materials and rental fees for virtual courses should be charged in a manner similar to instructional materials for in-person courses.

(16) A state fund should be created to assure that all schools will have sufficient virtual learning hardware, software, networking and infrastructure.

(17) Rental fees for home instructional technologies should be charged consistent with rental fees for in-person learning materials.

(18) Students not enrolled in public school should be permitted to access IVLC courses by paying the full cost of the course, including direct and indirect costs.

(19) At least twenty (20) dual or concurrent enrollment virtual courses from the Core Transfer Library shall be made available through the IVLC.

(20) Current Indiana public school virtual learning operations:

- (a) Indiana Online Academy \$275/course  
(Central Indiana Education Service Center)
- (b) Indiana Virtual Academy \$275/course  
(Ripley County Learning Network)
- (c) Indiana Academy for Science, Math & Humanities \$165-\$298/ course  
(Ball State University)
- (d) Indiana University Online High School \$396/course
- (e) K-12, Inc. \$188/course

(21) Virtual charter schools should not be permitted.

(See Exhibit I)

Melissa Brown, Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS), informed the Committee that IPS has a virtual alternative school that has been in existence for one year.

Rick Muir, Indiana Federation of Teachers, urged the Committee to look at the following issues as it considers the future of virtual schools in Indiana: accountability, standards, accessibility, funding, and teacher quality.

John Ellis, Indiana School Boards Association & Indiana Association of Public School Superintendents, voiced the following concerns and issues regarding virtual schools:

- (1) Curriculum alignment with Indiana standards.
- (2) Use of highly trained teachers.
- (3) Availability of full day programs for homebound students across the state.
- (4) Funding.
- (5) Accountability.
- (6) Access.
- (7) Pedagogy.

- (8) Learning styles.
- (9) Ownership of the Internet connection.
- (10) Type of assessments.
- (11) Public Law 217, the Certificated Educational Employee Bargaining Act (IC 20-29).

Jim Cousins, who is the parent of a special needs son, discussed how he and his son has benefitted from the higher level of parental involvement permitted by virtual learning. He stated that the standards should be the same for both virtual learning programs and traditional brick and mortar schools.

Justin Szaday, Connections Academy student, voiced his support for virtual schools.

Lauren Ahlersmeyer, Connections Academy parent, voiced her support for virtual schools.

Monique Christensen, Indiana Families for Virtual Schools, urged the Committee to engage in open minded research and investigation of funding options for virtual public schools in Indiana. (See Exhibit J)

Chairman Porter advised all that were present that there would be continued debate on virtual education by the Committee.

Chairman Porter set the next Committee meeting date for October 1, 2008 at 1:00 p.m. The topic discussed at that meeting will be college readiness. The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m.